

a descendant of the Miskito royal family.⁸ (Heath, a; 49; Lehmann, 173 b: 715-716; Joyce: 8-9.) The present writer has, however, little faith in its exactitude, and such is also the opinion of the various older Indians he consulted about it.⁹

In former days the Miskito were called Kirihi¹⁰ and lived on the narrow isthmus between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean, a territory which the Nicarao occupied at the arrival of the Spaniards.

Late in the tenth century this country was invaded by a tribe of immigrants from the north (probably the Nicarao) and eventually, after a long struggle, the Miskito were compelled to leave their old home and retreat to the eastern shore of Lake Nicaragua. Here they resided for nearly a century, but finally, again under foreign pressure, this time exercised probably by the Sumu or Matagalpa, they migrated to the Atlantic shore. Believing that they had now found a safe home, they gave themselves the name of *Dis-kituras-nani*, "they who can not be dislodged," which was corrupted into Miskito.

At the time of their migration to the Atlantic their leader was a sort of culture hero, named Wakna, whose son *Lakytara* "Evening Star" conquered the whole coast from Honduras to Costa Rica. While Wakna was still alive disputes arose among the Miskito chiefs. A rebellion, headed by *Wialandin*,¹¹ was defeated; its leader was imprisoned, and 300 of his partisans were executed.

PHYSIQUE: PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

GENERAL.—The Sumu differ naturally in many points in physique 141 from the Negro-mixed Miskito, but there are also certain slight dissimilarities between them and the pure Miskito or *Tawira*. The latter are, as a rule, well built and of middle height, whereas the Sumu are rather thickset and low in stature. According to Schultz (67) the Sumu from Rio Prinsapolca measure from 1.427 m. to 1.68 m. with 1.5816 m. as an average.¹²

Both tribes are sturdy, heavy muscled, proportionally broad 142 shouldered, and have deep chests. The arms are well developed in comparison to the legs. As both of these tribes are essentially canoe men, passing most of their time in a cramped position in small boats, they lack the well-developed leg muscles of the "civilized" Indians of the interior.

COLOR.—The Sumu are of fairer complexion than all the other Indian tribes of this part of Central America, not excluding the so-called pure Miskito or *Tawira*.

⁸ The father of Mr. Pereira was a Mexican; his mother was the daughter of a Scotchman named Haly and an Indian woman of the Miskito royal family.

⁹ Pereira, besides, denies having given out this version, and claims to be in possession of the correct account.

¹⁰ This name has an alluring similarity to Corobiei, under which name the early Spanish historians of Central America mention an Indian tribe which lived formerly in northwestern Costa Rica to the south of Lake Nicaragua.

¹¹ Compare words "enemy" in the Miskito language.

¹² The anthropological measurements by Schultz, quoted in this study, were taken on 12 Sumu from Rio Prinsapolca and 25 Rama from Rama Key, all males.

● 142 SACRAL PIGMENT SPOT.—The "Oriental mark" (Mongolen-Fleck) is met with among all these tribes during early infancy. It consists of a bluish-gray spot found in the sacral region, which gradually disappears in adult life. The Indians pay no attention to it and most of them do not even know of its existence.

141 CEPHALIC INDEX.—The Sumu are on the average hyperbrachycephalic, that is, they have exceedingly broad heads. The cephalic index, which is obtained by dividing the breadth of the head by its length and multiplying the result by 100, was found to be 89.48 according to Schultz (71-72). This high figure is surpassed by few American tribes.¹² It may be the result of artificial deformation, since this practice was formerly current among the Sumu.

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MORPHOLOGICAL FACE INDEX.—The Sumu are on the average mesoprosopic, that is, they have proportionally narrow faces; Schultz (72) found a face index of 84.82 among this tribe living on Rio Prinsapolca, while among the Rama the figure was higher (85.20).

NOSE.—The nose of both Miskito and Sumu is relatively large; the profile is slightly convex among most of pure-blooded Indians. The nasal index is, on the average, very low among the Sumu, the range of variation extending from 66.0 to 83.3, with 73.76 as an average (Schultz: 74). This tribe is therefore mesorrhinic; the Rama, however, have even a narrower nose and are classed as leptorrhinic, the index ranging from 57.6 to 75.9 with an average of 65.96, a rather unusually low figure for American Indians.

EARS.—The Indians of the Mosquito Coast have relatively narrow ears, the physiognomic ear index averaging 54.09 among the Sumu; those of the Rama are still narrower with an average ear index of only 52.64 (Schultz: 75).

142 EYES.—The large brilliant eyes are so dark brown that they appear black to the casual observer. In both Miskito and Sumu they are horizontal, but those of their northern neighbors, the Paya, have a slight Mongoloid tilt.

LIPS AND CHIN.—The lips are full, but not thick, among the Sumu and the pure-blooded Miskito, while the chin is generally "receding"; a prominent chin occurs rarely.

HANDS AND FEET.—The hands are small as compared with Whites and Negroes. In most individuals the annularis is slightly longer than the index finger; the reverse is apparently never the case. The little finger is relatively very small and stands inside of the direction of the ulnar edge of the palm, as if it had been crowded toward the fourth finger. The smallness and position of this finger is not an inherited racial character, but the direct result of the narrow paddle

¹² Boas, quoted by R. Martin (Lehrbuch der Anthropologie, Jena, 1914) found an average cephalic index in Wichita Indians (Oklahoma) of both sexes of 89.5 and one of 89.7 in male California Indians.

handles.¹⁴ These conditions are not yet apparent on the hands of 142 children.

HAIR.—All these Indians have an abundance of hair growth extending very low over the forehead, but it is very scarce on the other parts of the body. The hair is usually black, and very straight and coarse, but occasionally hair with very long low waves may be met with among the pure Indians. Gray and white hair occurs sometimes but not by far as frequently as among the white race. Baldness is practically unknown. Beard growth is very scarce, while chest hair is totally absent among the pure Indians.

LONGEVITY.—There are no reliable figures to be obtained regarding 165 the age of the older Indians. Very few of them seem to have passed their sixtieth or seventieth birthday; still during the years 1917-1922 the writer met a number of Indians who were about 4 to 6 years old at the great eruption of the volcano Coseguina on the Bay of Fonseca [31] in 1835. This catastrophe, which was accompanied by great earthquakes, is still spoken of by these Indians as the "Great Darkness" (M.: *tihmya-tara*; S.: *puk-sani*, *puk-barak*);¹⁵ a thick rain of ashes poured over the coast at the time and the sun was as invisible as at night.

DEFORMITIES.—In former days deformed children were not allowed 732 to grow up; they were either buried alive or left to starve. This 847 accounts for the rare cases of deformities encountered among these Indians. Only the strong and healthy being allowed to grow up and produce children, there is little variety of physical and mental development. Even were such a deformed child allowed to grow up, it would not easily find a mate and would die without leaving any children behind. In civilized countries deformities are propagated, as such people will find someone to marry them if they have fortune.

If an Indian has some deformed limb, either brought with it into the world or the result of an accident, he will secrete it as much as possible 732 from the sight of other people, as such is considered a great disgrace. It would be an insult to ask him to show it or to even refer to it.¹⁶ In case of a dispute among Indians one will immediately pick out the weak points in the personal appearance of his adversary.

¹⁴ See the illustration given by Schultz (60).

¹⁵ The abbreviations for the tribal names used in the present study are the following: M.—Miskito; S.—Sumu; T.—Twahka; P.—Panamaka; U.—Ulwa.

¹⁶ At the Sansar village on Rio Coco the writer knew a Miskito who had lost several fingers on one hand through an accident at the gold mines of Pispla; from that time on he always carried a bandage around the mutilated hand. In the same village a young boy, having lost several toes, was continually wearing a shoe on that foot, although the other foot was always bare.

826 heard the peculiar sound produced by two trees rubbing against each other during high wind.

842 STERILITY AND ABORTION.—Sterility is considered a disgrace, and the average husband will abandon his wife if she is unable to bear children. Abortion and prevention of pregnancy are accomplished [847] by the use of certain herbs. In general the Indian woman is very prolific, but infant mortality is also very high. [165]

847 INFANTICIDE.—In former days babies of the female sex were often exposed and left to die, as they were supposed to bring ill luck. Male children are always received with great joy, which the father manifests by shooting off his gun. Deformed children were buried alive in olden days, as they were supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, or to have been begotten by such one. A similar belief is held by many other tribes in both Americas and accounts for the total absence or scarcity of crippled persons in such regions.

847 Twins were also exposed, as they were said to be a proof of the wife's disloyalty to her husband; the latter considered that only one of the two infants could possibly be his. If twins were of different sex the female was always killed. Lehmann (c: I, 405) states among the Miskito the red dog (*pdūan*) is the master of the twins, and that for that reason these Indians whip dogs at the birth of twins (*pdūnki*), but this report needs confirmation. 845

854 CHILD CARRYING.—The women carry their children in a long cloth which they aling over the back, tying the two ends together in front at the breast. This way the mother is not prevented from following her usual occupation, as both her hands are left free, while the child is firmly secured in a safe and comfortable position. The prevalence of bowlegs among these Indians may possibly be ascribed to this manner of carrying the infants. • [142]

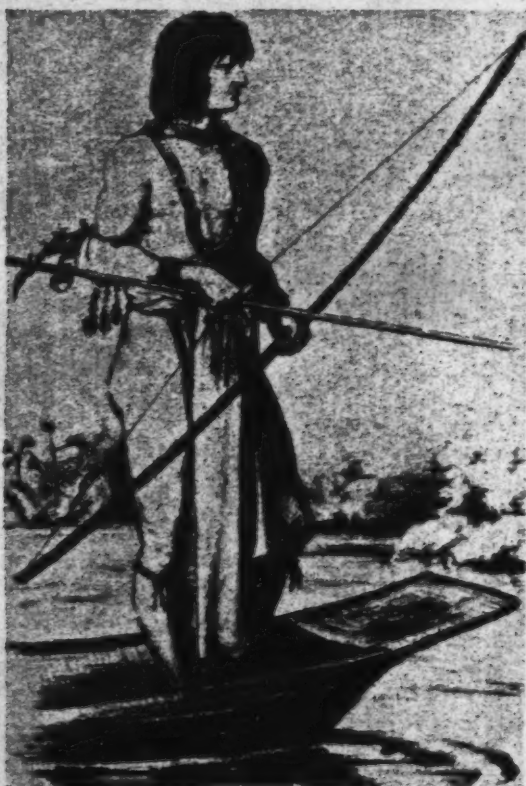
855 CARE OF CHILDREN.—The Indian child receives little attention from its parents, yet it rarely cries. The parents have, however, great patience toward their offspring, and they seldom chastise a naughty child. Should they, however, lose their patience and seize the whip, they may administer fearful beatings, but such cases are extremely rare. Lullaby songs are rarely heard, but the parents tell their offspring fables, legends, and fairy tales.

862 The last child is not generally weaned until the fourth year and sometimes even longer. I have observed cases among the Miskito where the young boys alternated their mother's breast with their father's tobacco pipe.

868 EDUCATION.—As the child grows up it is made acquainted with the occupations of its parents. The boy accompanies his father on hunting and fishing journeys as soon as he is strong enough to do so. The father makes toys for him, as diminutive canoes and paddles; later he obtains small bows and arrows in order to practice shooting at birds

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948

SA15 Mosquito SA15



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PLATE 35.—Somo and Mosquito Indians, Nicaragua. Top: Somo man. Bottom: Mosquito village, Pearl Lagoon. (Courtesy American Museum of Natural History.)

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008 were dying out rapidly, which may account for the lower figure now given. The Rama tribe, of about 200 members, living along the lagoons near Bluefields, has become a sort of alum population; its existence on the edge of the rough seaport village subjects it to the whims and volition of all and sundry. From the Río Tinto northward live the Black Caribs, descendants of the aborigines of St. Vincent Island. In and about Bluefields, Pearl Lagoon, San Juan del Norte, and on the islands, the inhabitants are largely mulattoes; Negroes as well as mulattoes are also found in the coastal towns.

MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MISKITO AND SUMU

- 142 The Miskito Indian is generally well built, of middle height whereas the Sumu Indian is rather thickset and of lower stature. Both are proportionally broad shouldered, have deep chests and are heavy muscled. Schultz²⁶ found the average measure of the adult Sumu and Rama to be 1.5816 m. It is also obvious to any observer that the arm and chest muscles are developed somewhat out of proportion to the leg muscles. This may be due to the fact that these people are essentially [184] canoe (pipante) folk whose chief method of travel consists of river boating. In fact, most of their enterprise is carried out by the use of a boat and the use of arm and torso muscles any exceed those of the lower extremities.

- 141 In our studies at Wasparam and Saulpuca the weights and heights were noted in a series of individuals with reference to their age. It is apparent that diet plays a role in development²² but since it will be shown later that the nutrition of these people is adequate in the light of present day criteria, the figures reveal presumably the inherent constitutional morphology of surface area. And since the changes in height and weight vary with the age of the individual it is important to take this factor into account.

It is to be noted that the figures are averages and do not reveal variation. Since the major part of growth occurs between birth and twenty years of age²³ the values given represent the peak of surface area development and the initial phases of further weight gain. However, measurements are no better than their definition and the indivi-

²² Palmer, C. E. Growth and the economic depression. Pub. Health Reports: 1934, 48, 1277-1292.

²³ Krogman, W. M. The Growth of Man. *Tabulae Biologicae*, 1941-42, 20, 1-967. Junk, Den Haag, Nederlands (delayed in press because of war).

²⁴ Krogman, W. M. Human Growth. *Ciba Symposia*, 1943, 5, 1456-1485.

000 comparison. The dietary in urban areas of coastal ports is predominan-
 144 tly one of imported and home grown cereal grains, whereas the river
 262 Indians consume a greater quantity of meats and fresh fruits. On the
 basis of the investigation by Roberts³³ it may be presumed that the
 variation in diet may account for the impairment of growth of coastal
 Indians. In specific physical anthropology there is sufficient reference
 elsewhere (vide Schultz²⁶).

142 The Miskito Indians have an abundance of hair growth extending
 low over the forehead; it is scarce on other parts of the body. The
 hair is commonly black and very straight, although several Indians
 were noted who had reddishbrown (a metallic auburn) shade of hair.
 Gray and white hair rare and beard growth is very scarce. Chest and
 pubic hair is absent among pure Indians.

165 Although there are no accurate figures dealing with longevity the
 impression gained was that once an Indian lived to be over twenty years
 of age he had good chances for old age. Conzemius¹ in 1922 met a
 number of Indians who were young children during the volcanic erup-
 tion of Coseguina on the bay of Fonseca in 1835. Our survey revealed
 a number of Indians who remembered missionaries who had been in
 the territory sixty or seventy years ago. The Indians themselves in-
 formed us that many die between the ages of fifty and sixty years of
 age, with the chief cause of death being the fever (malaria). As will
 be shown, infectious disease takes a heavy toll of life during infancy and
 in early senescence. It is to be noted that the situation may change
 732 and the death rate in later life may increase. In former days sickly and
 deformed children were either buried alive or starved to death. Only
 the strong and healthy were allowed to grow up. Today there is no such
 control; Indians with deformities will secrete them or bandage the
 part involved; tolerance to diseased people has increased.

GENERAL CUSTOMS OF THE MISKITO

291 Today the men wear loose cotton shirts (*prak*) and trousers (*tran-*
sis); the shirt tails are usually not tucked in. The older boys wear a
 similar garment but commonly among youngsters the dress is chiefly
 a loin or breech cloth (*palpura*) or nothing at all. Many of the women
 wear dresses (*prak*) although some of them and the girls wear a piece
 of cloth (*kwaluntara*) which is wrapped about the hips and extends

³³ Roberts, L. J.; Blair, R.; Lenning, B., and Scott, M. Effect of a milk
 supplement on the physical status of institutional children: I. Growth in height
 and weight (pp. 287-300). II. Ossification of the bones of the wrist (pp. 494-509).
 III. Progress of dental caries (pp. 805-823). Amer. Jour. Dis. Children, 1938, 56.